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COMMUNITY REVIEW

## HYDE PARK

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies



City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975



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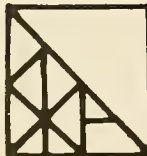


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## INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the Hyde Park District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials who are defining the needs of the Hyde Park District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the district including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of physical planning issues which concern residents in Hyde Park. Preliminary strategies which address these issues are also suggested in this section. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for Hyde Park. Section four outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.



HYDE PARK





## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. SHORT HISTORY

Originally part of Dorchester, Dedham and Milton, Hyde Park became a town in 1868. In 1912, Hyde Park was the last district to be annexed to the City. Early settlement began during the 1840's and 1850's shortly before the Civil War. By 1856 there were over 200 homes established in the Fairmount section. After 1865, growth in Hyde Park was rapid. Commuter train service was extended along the Penn Central tracks and new churches and streets were built to serve the new neighborhoods. While Readville, the industrial center of the district, was already settled with the Tileston and Hollingsworth Paper Mill (the oldest factory in Hyde Park), the Sunnyside section and the remainder of the Fairmount section was developed at this time.

A general dissatisfaction with the town water rates and service is often given as the reason why a majority of Hyde Park's 3,000 odd voters decided in the November 1911 election to join the City of Boston. Over the years, however, there have been stirrings by Hyde Park residents to return to the status of a Town. In 1962 because of dissatisfaction with the proposed Southwest Expressway, which would start at Roxbury Crossing and slice through Roslindale and Hyde Park to link up with Rte. 128 in Canton, residents petitioned their legislators to sever Hyde Park from the City and to join Norfolk County. This effort failed to win a majority support of the legislators although later during Governor Sargeant's Administration the expressway proposal was finally withdrawn.

### B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Hyde Park, located in the southwest quadrant of the City, surrounded by West Roxbury, Mattapan, Roslindale and Milton, was one of the few district's in the city to gain population between 1960 and 1970. Its increase of 28% to 36,509 exceeded West Roxbury's 24% growth and the City's loss of 8% of its population during this period.

Because the district is composed of a high percentage of 1-2 family owner-occupied structures, the largest age group is under 17 years. However, in a recent Boston Housing Authority (BHA) report on the need for elderly housing in the City, Hyde Park ranked in the top priority group because of its number of elderly in the low income category and its long elderly waiting list for entry into existing Hyde Park BHA developments.

In 1970 median family income for Hyde Park was \$10,693, about \$1,500 above the City median, while the proportion of families earning below \$5,000 annually was below that of the City.



GEORGE WRIGHT  
GOLF COURSE

STONY BROOK

STONY BROOK  
RESERVATION

GEORGE-  
TOWN

CLEARY  
SQUARE

TRUMAN  
HIGHWAY

READVILLE

SUB-AREAS  
HYDE PARK

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Hyde Park contained 10,738 housing units in 1970, an increase from 1960 of 16%. The majority of this growth was in the western half of the district where new single family construction and multi-family units have been completed.

Cleary Square, the commercial center of Hyde Park, has had some storefront deterioration in recent years, as well as increasing store turnovers to retail uses, such as fast food and discount stores. Based on a vacancy survey of the Square's 165 stores during the summer of 1974, 16 (10%) were vacant. Basic problems to the Square are lack of convenient off-street parking, poor traffic circulation and crime. Nevertheless, the recent opening of Star Market and Osco Drugs along Hyde Park Avenue at the southern portion of the Square may be a healthy sign of economic revival.

The following is a discussion of Hyde Park's sub-areas.

1. River/West Streets

Located in the northeastern portion of the district, this sub-area is bounded by Mattapan and Roslindale. In 1970, its population was 14,837, an increase of 12% over 1960. This growth can be attributed to new apartment construction in the Cummins Highway/American Legion Highway area.

Median family income ranged between \$10,289 and \$10,937, which is nearly the district median.

In 1970, there were 4,714 housing units in the River-West Streets area of which approximately 600 units needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of these units were located in the vicinity of the Cummins Tower Apartments and American Legion Highway.

This area has a relatively low percentage of owner-occupied units (28%) relative to the overall district (58%).

2. Cleary Square

Located in the central portion of Hyde Park, Cleary Square is bounded by the Stonybrook Reservation, West Street, Neponset River and Readville. Its 1970 population was 8,153, a gain of 31% over 1960. Much of this growth can be attributed to new single-family home construction in the area west of Penn Central railroad tracks.

Since 1960, Cleary Square's elderly population has grown by 14% compared to the City's loss of 18%. Median family income was comparable to the district-wide median of \$10,700, and only 13% of total families in 1970 had median incomes under \$5,000.

Of the 2,689 units counted in 1970, 339 (13%) needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of this housing is located south of Cleary Square.

There are also a number of apartment houses in this sub-area, many of which are located along River Street near Cleary Square. Almost 55% of the structures are owner-occupied.

### 3. Truman Highway

In 1970, Truman Highway's population was 7,017, an increase of 29% over 1960. This growth was primarily due to new single-family home construction.

The population in this sub-area showed a high growth of elderly (24%) and youth 15-19 (33%) during the last decade. Median Family income was \$11,057 which exceeded the district's median of \$10,693.

In 1970, only 125 housing units in this sub-area, representing 4% of total units, required repairs exceeding \$1,000. These houses were generally concentrated near Truman Highway.

Approximately 63% of Truman Highway's total units were owner-occupied.

### 4. Stonybrook/Georgetown

Located near West Roxbury in the western portion of the district, this sub-area is centered on the Georgetown Housing development which was completed during the late 1960's. In 1970, this area contained 878 housing units and 2,674 people (all from Georgetown). Median family income (\$10,289) was slightly below the district-wide median and the number of families earning less than \$5,000 was 462 (12%).

### 5. Readville

Located in the southern portion of the district and bounded by the Town of Dedham, Stonybrook Reservation, Cleary Square, and the Neponset River, this sub-area is generally viewed as a separate neighborhood within the Hyde Park community. In 1970, its population was 4,149, an increase of 25% over 1960. This growth is a result of new apartment and single-family home construction.

Median family income ranges from \$10,289 to \$11,051, slightly higher than the district-wide median, and 15% of the total families have median incomes under \$5,000.

Of the 2,593 housing units recorded in 1970, 291 (11%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of these units are located in the older portion of Readville, south of Neponset Valley Parkway. Approximately 53% of Readville's total units are owner-occupied.

Readville's only commercial center comprises the stores along Neponset Valley Parkway near Hyde Park Avenue. This center is old and contains no more than 10 establishments. North of Readville along Truman Highway is the recently constructed shopping center which includes a supermarket and several service and retail establishments.

# Comparative Statistics - Hyde Park

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>River/ West Street</u>	<u>Cleary Square</u>	<u>Truman Highway</u>	<u>Stonybrook/ Georgetown</u>
Total 1970	14,837	8,153	7,017	2,675
Change from '60	+12%	+31%	+29%	NA
Aged 15-19 yrs.	1,413	585	719	223
Change from '60	+16%	+11%	+33%	NA
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	1,204	587	513	181
Change from '60	+40%	+34%	+46%	NA
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	1,778	802	697	199
Change from '60	+15%	+14%	+24%	NA
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	\$10,289- 10,939	\$10,289- 10,662	\$11,057	\$10,289
% Families under \$5,000	4%	13%	12%	12%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	4,714	2,689	2,840	878
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	580	339	125	29
Owner Occupied Units	24%	54%	63%	0%
Mobility of Residents- %Residents in same house over 5 years in 1970	65%	65%	65%	60%

NA = not available



# Comparative Statistics - Hyde Park

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

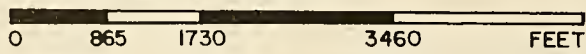
<u>Population</u>	<u>Readville</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
Total 1970	4,149	36,509	639,803
Change from '60	+25%	+28%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs.	380	3,037	60,900
Change from '60	+22%	+15%	+17%
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	441	2,819	76,958
Change from '60	+38%	+38%	+41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	409	3,749	81,437
Change from '60	+13%	+14%	-5%
<u>Income</u>			
Median Family	\$10,289- 11,051	\$10,693	\$9,133
% Families under \$5,000	14.5%	12%	22%
<u>Housing</u>			
Total Dwelling Units	2,593	10,735	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	291	1,364	67,102
Owner Occupied Units	53%	58%	27%
Mobility of Residents- %Residents in same house over 5 years in 1970	65%	65%	50%



- 1. ROSS FIELD FLOODLIGHTS
- 2. SMITH FIELD PLGD. RENOVATIONS
- 3. NEW HYDE PARK FIRE STATION
- 4. READVILLE PLGD. RENOVATIONS

# PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

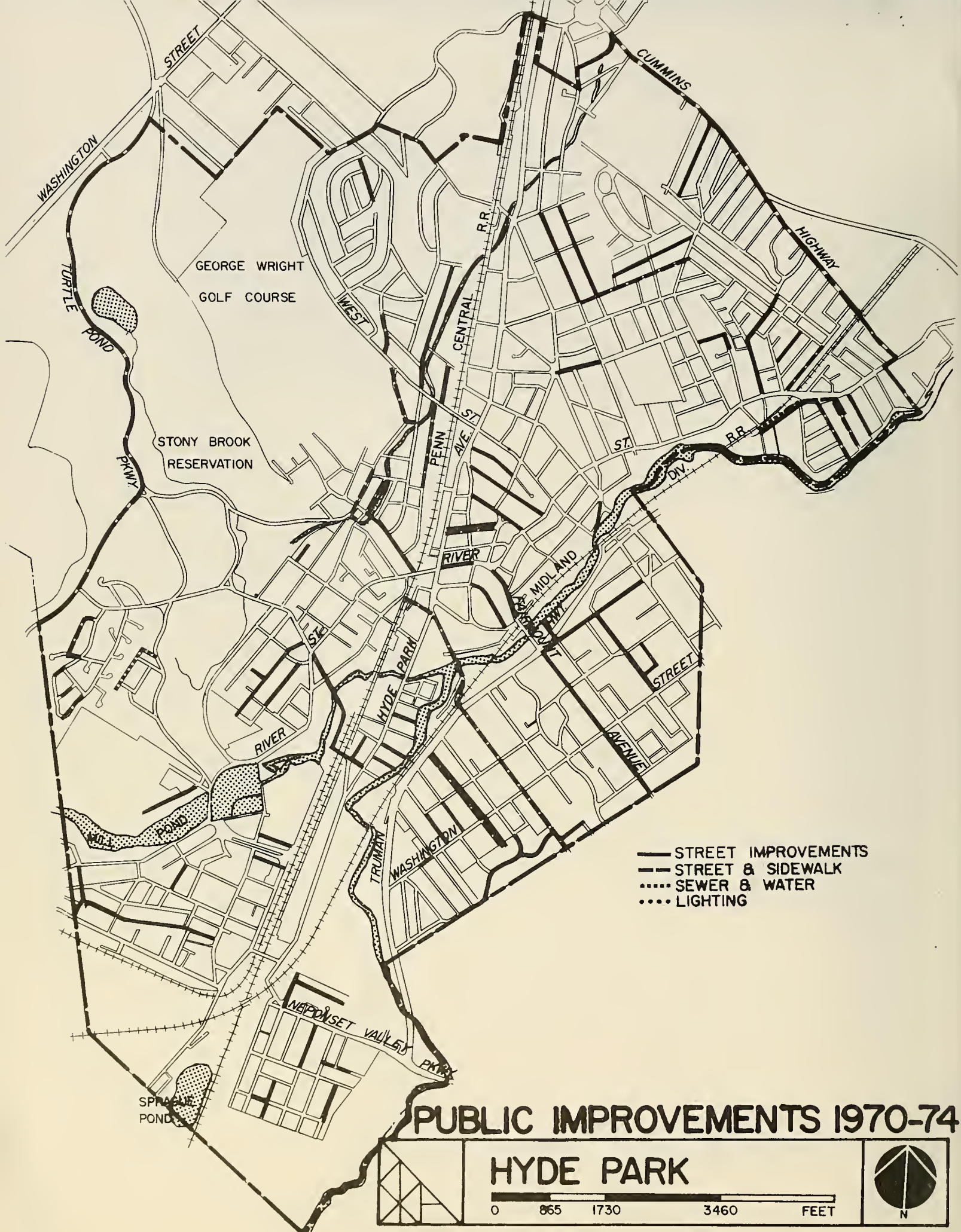
## HYDE PARK



### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1970 the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, the reconstruction of streets and replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$700,000 on the construction of a new Hyde Park Fire Station on Fairmount Avenue; \$60,000 for renovations to Readville Playground; \$150,000 for floodlights at Ross Field; and \$4,800 for renovations to Smith Field Playground. (See Public Facilities map.) At the same time, there were over 70 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 5 streets that underwent sewer or water line replacements, 16 sidewalks replaced, 6 streets with new lighting including new sodium vapor commercial lighting in Cleary Square, and over 100 streets with increased lighting intensity. (See Public Improvements map).







#### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 indicates that there has been residential, retail, office, manufacturing and institutional investment in Hyde Park. The majority of new construction has been in the form of new single-family housing in scattered sites, and new multi-family units of the Georgetown apartment development. Most of the retail and office activity has occurred along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

Industrial development has also been concentrated along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue. The most substantial industrial investment was a new warehouse at 101 Sprague Street.



## II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### A. RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

#### Issues

There are three areas which have shown signs of housing deterioration: 1) the residential area south of Cleary Square between the Penn Central Midland and Main Line Branch Railroads contains a number of homes in need of moderate exterior repairs; 2) the residential section along the Penn Central Mainline Branch in Readville has a number of homes in need of moderate to extensive exterior repairs; and 3) there are a number of residential structures in fair to poor condition along Summer Street owned by the State Department of Public Works (DPW).

In addition, while there are extensive areas of single family homes in Hyde Park, there are insufficient low and moderate income units for elderly residents. A recent Boston Housing Authority study of the need for elderly housing indicated that Hyde Park was one of six areas in the City having a significant need.

#### Strategies

The establishment of a better funded and more extensive Housing Improvement Program (HIP) for Hyde Park will help stabilize those areas with housing deterioration, although special action will be needed to renovate state-owned structures along Summer Street (this is described below). During 1975, Hyde Park residents will be able to apply for funds under the HIP program at a site office located in the Municipal Building at Cleary Square. Funds will be available for approximately 200 buildings.

Although there are no new elderly housing projects currently programmed for Hyde Park, the State Department of Community Affairs has shown interest in developing an elderly project on State DPW-owned land along Summer Street using State Chapter 667 funds. In addition, the Harlow Lumber site is being considered for elderly housing and a site at Truman Highway and Fairmount Avenue is being discussed for an elderly housing development under a financing arrangement with the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency (MHFA).



## B. REUSE OF SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR LAND

### Issues

Approximately 6 acres of vacant land and a number of structures are located within the Hyde Park section of the Penn Central Southwest Corridor. Since the late 1960's when this land was first purchased by the State Department of Public Works for extension of Interstate 95 through the City, this land has been allowed to deteriorate. During the past two years, there has been various proposals for reuse of the vacant land and the resale of existing structures to homeowners; however, no final actions have been taken by the State.

### Strategies

The resale of Southwest Corridor land should be expedited as should the proposal for new elderly housing sponsored by the State Department of Community Affairs on DPW-owned land at Gordon Avenue and Summer Street. This strategy will help to stabilize this area.

## C. NEED FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

### Issues

There are a variety of problems in Hyde Park's neighborhoods which should be addressed through expenditure of city funds on capital items. These problems include inadequate water pressure in neighborhoods adjacent to the Milton town line, vandalism to Ross Fieldhouse, insufficient street lights in older residential areas, bridge resurfacing and repairs (Milton, West and River Street bridges) and inadequate facilities such as Readville fire station and George White Health Center.

### Strategies

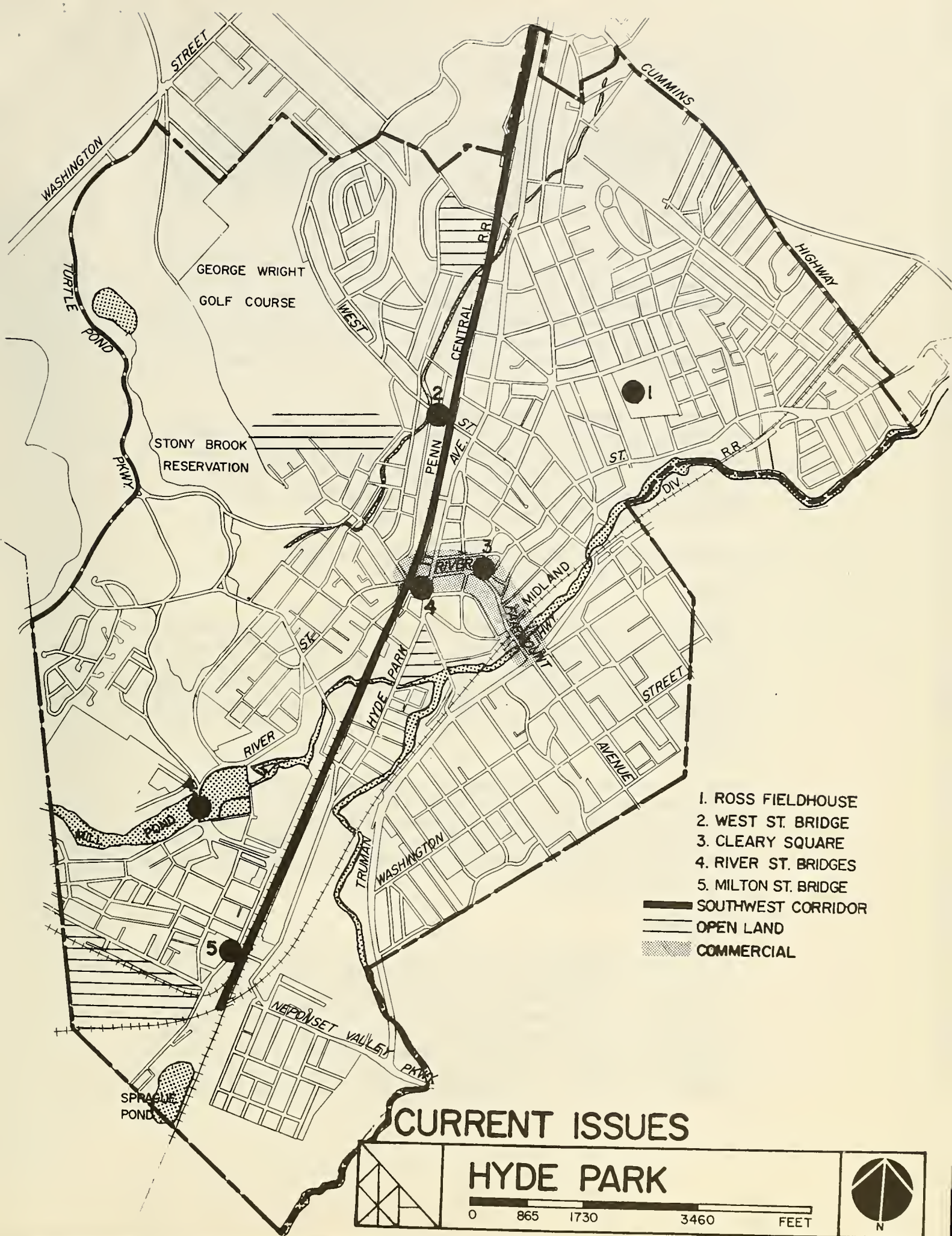
The City's strategy for approaching these problems should include accelerated use of Capital funds for a systematic water line replacement program in the district, extension of new street lighting to the older neighborhoods, bridge reconstruction, and upgrading of Readville fire station.

## D. COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION OF CLEARY SQUARE

### Issues

Cleary Square is Hyde Park's major commercial center. The Square's problems include a 10% vacancy rate, lack of convenient off-street parking, traffic congestion, and crime. Like most of Boston's older commercial centers, Cleary Square has had problems in holding its customers because of competition from nearby suburban centers in Quincy, Milton and Dedham.





## Strategies

Major efforts to stimulate retail business in the Square should be initiated by the Board of Trade, an active group of business leaders in the Square. The Board's efforts at organizing "special sale" days and other promotion activities should be coupled with encouraging merchants to improve their storefronts.

The City's efforts to improve Cleary Square during 1975 focus on the development of an off-street parking lot in the area between Hyde Park Avenue and the Penn Central Mainline tracks. This will require the demolition of the old Top Dollar Market. The introduction of new sodium vapor lights along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue should help reduce crime and vandalism in the Square.

The City's strategy in future years should include: 1) encouraging merchants to improve their storefronts; 2) planting new trees along River Street; 3) completing a traffic and circulation study along River Street, Hyde Park Avenue, Winthrop Street and along other congested routes; and 4) elimination of billboards from the Square.

## E. RETENTION OF OPEN AND UNDERUTILIZED VACANT LAND

### Issues

The amount of open and vacant land in Hyde Park is impressive. The MDC Stonybrook Reservation and George Wright Golf Courses are both within Hyde Park. There are also large vacant land tracts scattered along the Neponset River and the Penn Central (Southwest Corridor). The Readville yards of the Penn Central includes 60-100 acres of land which is no longer used by the railroad.

There is concern by residents that open and vacant areas should be protected and not be developed. In recent years, residents in the Gordon Avenue/Emmet Street area opposed development of townhouses on a 16-acre tract adjacent to the Stonybrook Reservation because the proposal eliminated a large open and natural area.

### Strategies

The City's strategy for retaining open and underutilized areas in Hyde Park depends heavily on use of zoning and land acquisition tools. Most areas which have come under development pressure in recent years, i.e. Barry's Quarry, Austin Street and Gordon Avenue have required City approvals by the Zoning Commission or Board of Appeals because variances from existing zoning were needed. This has meant that the City's discretionary powers can be useful to protect the district's open areas.

City acquisition of open land is more difficult as it requires use of scarce funds to purchase expensive real estate. In some cases, however, this strategy should be recommended. For example, in areas where there is inadequate park land available to residents or where a specific parcel has unusual natural features such as marsh, ledge or scenic views, acquisition should be considered.







### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates in four areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, capital improvements and neighborhood services.

#### A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied dwellings, will be available throughout Hyde Park and has funds (\$150,000) for approximately 200 buildings. An HIP site office has been opened in the Hyde Park Municipal Building for administration of this program.

#### B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

Over the next three years the City will concentrate funds on the revitalization of Cleary Square. This year's funds are being used for: (1) new sodium vapor lighting (\$70,500) along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue, and (2) site acquisition, demolition and development of Top Dollar building site and adjacent land for an off-street parking lot (\$315,000).

#### C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The City's Capital improvement program for Hyde Park includes the following projects:

<u>Project</u>	<u>1975 Funding Allocation</u>
Alterations & Repairs-District 5 Police Station	\$ 490,000
Alteration & Repairs-Municipal Building	330,000
Hyde Park High School-Renovation (in planning)	8,000,000
Ross Playground (playfield)	250,000
Readville Playground (reconstruct playfields)	65,000
Amatucci Playground (construction of children's play area)	174,000
Ohrenberger School (tennis courts)	40,000
Lighting for Fairmount Public Housing Project	45,000
City's share for engineering and design of traffic signal improvements at American Legion Highway & Hyde Park Avenue	4,500 (design only)

The City has also recommended to the State that Chapter 90 funds be used for street reconstruction of West Street from Hyde Park Avenue to Poplar Street.

D. NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

The rehabilitation of a portion of the Roslindale Municipal Building for use as a neighborhood health center will help to improve health delivery in the entire southwestern area of Boston, including Hyde Park.

#### IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of Hyde Park's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined in a general manner below. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the selection of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing should include: (1) the continuation of the Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 housing units annually; (2) modernization funds to improve the Fairmount Housing Project; (3) construction of at least 100-200 units of elderly housing in 1976 to respond to Hyde Park's elderly housing needs; and (4) housing investment in the Southwest Corridor to provide for improvement of existing houses on Summer Street and for new elderly housing construction.

Future capital investment needs include sewer and water line improvements in Hyde Park's older neighborhoods, new street lighting, and upgrading of existing facilities such as the Readville Fire Station and George White Health Center.

A storefront rehabilitation program should be established and presented to Cleary Square merchants. This program could provide a rebate to business owners for repairing storefronts and should be extended to the approximately 80 stores in the Square. To reduce crime and vandalism, funds should be continued and expanded for a footpatrolman in the Square. Finally, the Board of Trade should consider the construction of an off-street parking facility on vacant land at the intersection of Central Avenue and Winthrop Street.

The City's Conservation Commission should consider acquisition of portions of Barry's Quarry and vacant areas adjacent to MDC's Stonybrook Reservation and George Wright Golf Courses because of the outstanding natural quality and topography of this land.

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Stability	Improve quality of existing housing stock	HIP-\$150,000 Lights for Fairmount Housing Project-\$45,000	Continuation of HIP program -200 units annually Utilize Section 8 funds Continue to modernize Fairmount Housing project
	Provide for the needs of the elderly including new housing areas)	Roslindale Health Center (to serve Southwest Boston areas) - \$65,500	100-200 units of low/moderate income elderly housing in 1976
Reuse of Southwest Corridor land	Reuse vacant land for housing and community related uses		Development of 2-acre Southwest Corridor-Summer Street site for elderly housing
	Resale of structures to owner-occupants		HIP & Section 8 funds to renovate houses; deeper subsidy may also be needed
Need for Capital Improvements	Use Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods	Alterations & repairs-District 5 Police station \$490,000 Alterations & repairs Municipal Building \$330,000 Hyde Park High School Renovation (in planning) Ross Playground \$250,000 Readville Plgd. 65,000 Amatucci Plgd. 174,000 Ohrenberger School 40,000 (tennis courts) City's Share for engineering & design of traffic signal improvements at American Legion Highway and Hyde Park Avenue (design only)	Sewer and Water line improvements in Sunnyside, Fairmount and Readville areas; New street lighting; street reconstruction; and upgrading of Readville Fire Station and George White Health Center



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Revitalization of Cleary Square	Improve traffic circulation in Square	Site acquisition, demolition and development of Top Dollar site to be used with adjacent land for off-street parking area -	Merchants off-street parking area on vacant land at the corner of Winthrop Street and Central Avenue
	Provide off-street parking facilities		
	Stimulate & attract new businesses		
	Encourage storefront rehabilitation		Provide storefront rehab program to 20% of merchants in 1976
	Maintain footpatrolman in Square to enforce parking restriction & to improve security	Foot patrolman is now assigned to Cleary Square	Continue and expand foot patrolman in Cleary Square
Retention of open & underutilized vacant land	Use of City's zoning powers		
Retention of open & underutilized vacant land	Acquire land in areas with open space needs or where unique topography exists		Vacant portions of Barry's Quarry and areas adjacent to Stonybrook Reservation & George Wright Golf Course should be considered for acquisition

